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**Review of *Singing Cowboys and All That Jazz: A Short History of Popular Music in Oklahoma* By William W. Savage, Jr.**

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University of Arizona Press

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*Singing Cowboys and All That Jazz: A Short History of Popular Music in Oklahoma.* By William W. Savage, Jr. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1983. Illustrations, notes on sources (including discographies), index. xii + 185 pp. \$14.95.

A monograph defined by state boundaries must begin (and may very well end) as an inventory—even if the scholar intends by careful study of the particular to make a contribution to wider human understanding, perhaps, or to explain the ways of a state to itself. Enthusiasts of six powerful genres of American music will recognize Oklahoma as an apt subject for an inventory of popular music. “Swing Low, Sweet Chariot” was first transcribed at a Choctaw boarding school in Oklahoma and sent to the Fisk Jubilee Singers in Nashville, Tennessee, who made it among the best known of black spirituals. Count Basie’s big band, the hallmark of Kansas City jazz, got its start as the Oklahoma City Blue Devils. Bob Wills and the Texas Playboys, the touchstone of western swing bands, performed on radio station KVOO in Tulsa. Woody Guthrie, the key to the folk revival in the United States, is remembered first as an Okie. Probably the world’s wealthiest

singing cowboy is from the state that boasts a town named for him—Gene Autry, Oklahoma. The first good player of the electric guitar, Charlie Christian, grew up and got his start as a jazz musician in Oklahoma. Many popular songwriters are from Oklahoma. And this is not to mention the dozens of others—from the West Coast jazzman Chet Baker to Mark Dinning, composer of the classic lament “Teen Angel”—who have roots in the Sooner State. The inventory seems remarkably complete: William W. Savage, Jr. even reveals the Oklahoma origins of Jack Teagarden, the jazz trombonist usually associated with Vernon, Texas.

Above all, Savage hopes that this survey will encourage the pride that Oklahomans feel in their state. He intends the volume, as well, to be a brief introduction to the history of popular music in Oklahoma, and as an investigation of a topic that has been markedly ignored by scholars, it is indeed a good start. But because this is likely to be the only book ever to be published seriously surveying popular music in Oklahoma, I wish that the author had taken the opportunity to analyze his material in greater depth—that, having inventoried his field and suggested directions of interpretation, he had done more to establish relationships among his musicians and their music. I am hungry for more particulars about the relationships among jazz, swing, and western swing. Other readers, grateful for the information Savage provides about black rhythm and blues, white rock and roll, and the white Okie folk idiom, may wish that he had worked out more thoroughly the influence, appreciation, borrowing, and mutual reference that, as his book suggests, have characterized American music, especially since the Second World War.

Nevertheless, students of American society and regional culture will be grateful for the information, and especially the discographies, that Savage has assembled. They will put his latest book alongside other useful recent attempts of scholars to come to terms with their own cultures through music.

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